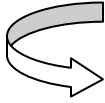


Citizen Participation in Virginia's Regulatory Process

Participation in the workings of government is one of the hallmarks of democracy. Virginia's citizens have the opportunity to actively participate in the regulatory process. This page answers questions about how you can better understand and participate in the regulatory process in Virginia.



What is a regulation?

A regulation is a law adopted by a state government agency. The General Assembly must pass a law authorizing or mandating a state agency to write regulations.



How do regulations affect me?

Regulations affect different aspects of life in Virginia. For example, if you fish, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries regulates the process for obtaining a fishing license. When you go to a restaurant, the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control creates the regulations, or rules, that the restaurant must follow when serving alcohol.



What is the Virginia Register of Regulations?

The Virginia Register of Regulations is Virginia's official biweekly publication of regulations that are in the process of being created, amended or repealed. All regulations must be filed with the Registrar of Regulations for them to become law. The Virginia Register provides a snapshot of all regulatory activity happening in Virginia.



How can the Virginia Register help me?

The Virginia Register includes notices of regulations that an agency is thinking about changing, proposed changes to regulations, emergency regulations, and final adopted regulations. You can follow a regulation's progress in the Virginia Register and find out what changes are being proposed, where a public hearing will be held, and who to contact if you have questions or want to comment on the regulation.



What is the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall?

The Virginia Regulatory Town Hall (Town Hall) is a website (<http://townhall.virginia.gov>) managed by the Department of Planning and Budget. Through this website, executive branch agencies submit regulations for review and approval of the Governor. Once through the review process, the regulation is sent to the Virginia Register for publication.

- The Town Hall is another resource for tracking the progress of a regulation. You can sign up to be notified by email of regulatory activity and comment on regulations using the public comment forum.
- NOTE: Not all state agencies' regulations are found on the Town Hall.



How can I participate in the regulatory process?

Citizen participation in the regulatory process is important. Ways to participate include:

- Contact the agency directly to express support of or concerns about a regulation. The Virginia Register (<http://register.dls.virginia.gov/>) provides contact information for each printed regulation.
- Sign up at the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall (<http://townhall.virginia.gov>) to be notified by email of regulatory actions, meetings, and public hearings.
- Post your comments regarding specific regulatory actions on public forums found at the Town Hall (<http://townhall.virginia.gov>).
- Request an agency to develop a new regulation or amend an existing regulation, but keep in mind that the agency must have been given the authority by the General Assembly to write the regulation. Send your written request to the agency responsible for writing the regulation and mention specifically that you are submitting a petition for rulemaking under § 2.2-4007 A of the Code of Virginia. Be sure to include your name; the regulation number, if known; and the substance and purpose of the rulemaking that is requested. The agency will provide a written response to your request.



How do I prepare to speak at a public hearing?

- If possible, try attending a public hearing before going to the one where you want to speak to better understand the format of the hearing.
- Time available for speaking may be limited to ensure that everyone is heard. Be sure to organize your comments, starting with identifying yourself, including your credentials and organization, if appropriate; clearly stating your position; giving two to three key points; and presenting appropriate facts.



I am unable to attend a hearing or meeting or would like to find out what is on the agenda, where can I get this information?

The Commonwealth Calendar (link <http://www.virginia.gov/cmsportal2/cgi-bin/calendar.cgi>) allows you to search by date and agency to find more details about a particular meeting, including the agenda and/or minutes. Meeting and hearing information pertaining to regulations is also posted on the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall (www.townhall.virginia.gov). Public hearings on regulations are also published with the proposed regulation in the Virginia Register (<http://register.dls.virginia.gov/issfiles.htm>).